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SUBJECT: PERU: 2008 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

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¶2. (SBU) Text of draft submission follows:

Peru

Peru's primary counterterrorism concern remained fighting remnants of the militant Maoist Sendero Luminoso (SL or Shining Path), a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization that convulsed the country in the 1980s and 1990s at a cost of more than 69,000 lives. SL remnants in the Upper Huallaga River Valley (UHV) sought to regroup and replenish their ranks following significant setbacks suffered in 2007. Separately, the SL organization in the Apurimac and Ene River Valley (VRAE) maintained its control over the area and opposed Government of Peru efforts to combat it. Both groups continued to engage in drug trafficking, and during the year carried out 64 terrorist acts in remote coca-growing areas that killed at least 12 police, four civilians, and 15 members of the military.

Although the Fujimori government nearly eliminated SL in the 1990s, the organization, now entwined with narcotics trafficking, remains a threat. The two Sendero organizations combined were thought to number several hundred armed combatants. While today's SL is shorter on revolutionary zeal than in the past, analysts believe leaders continue to use Maoist philosophy to justify their illicit activities.

Involvement in drug production and trafficking provided SL with funding to conduct operations, allowing it to improve relations with local communities in remote areas and to recruit new members. While SL in the UHV worked during the year to recuperate from losses suffered in 2007, insufficient government presence in the more remote VRAE allowed the organization there to continue operating.

VRAE: Significant events in 2008

On March 5, five armed attackers killed two Peruvian National Police (PNP) officers near the town of Chanchamayo in Junin department.

On March 23, an estimated 30 Sendero members ambushed an anti-drug police unit near Quinua in Ayacucho department, killing one.

On April 30, SL attackers killed two civilians who were acting as guides for military personnel, near the town of Ancoin in Ayacucho department.

On June 27, Sendero members attacked troops on a counternarcotics operation near Sivia in Ayacucho department,

killing one.

On October 9, in northern Huancavelica department, SL triggered a remotely activated bomb underneath a Peruvian Army truck returning soldiers to a nearby base. The attackers then opened fire from both sides of the road, killing 14 soldiers and 2 civilians. Sixteen others were wounded, three of them critically. It was the deadliest Sendero attack since the 1992 capture of Sendero founder Abimael Guzman.

On November 16, an SL ambush killed three PNP officers in the town of Huanta in northern Ayacucho.

In late August, the Army began an offensive called "Operation Excellence," aimed at taking control of the Vizcatan region in northern Ayacucho department. While there were unconfirmed reports of SL casualties, the military suffered losses in a number of SL attacks in response to the offensive.

Implementation of the Garcia government's "Plan VRAE," which called for 2,000 troops and 19 anti-terrorism bases operated under a central command is still evolving. Plans for new health, education, and infrastructure investment in these isolated communities where the state lacks presence were not implemented, although new Prime Minister Yehude Simon led a full cabinet delegation to the VRAE in November to evaluate the situation.

UHV: Significant events in 2008

During the period June 2007 to November 2008 the "Huallaga Police Front" (a an initiative begun in 2006 under then-President Toledo) prosecuted a counterterrorism campaign in the UHV and captured more than 100 alleged SL members, including one national-level leader; seized dozens of weapons, explosives and ammunition; destroyed 27 SL camps; and broke up an urban cell that served as an intelligence link.

On October 14, suspected Sendero elements attacked a PNP vehicle traveling on the highway north of Tingo Maria in Huanuco department, firing on it from both sides of the road. Two of the five officers inside were injured, one of whom later died.

On November 26, Suspected Sendero attackers ambushed a PNP convoy on the highway some 20 kilometers north of Tingo Maria in Huanuco department, killing five police and wounding four others.

Other Information

Government efforts to improve interagency cooperation, especially in intelligence, and to strengthen prosecutorial capacity were somewhat successful. Police units specializing in counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics conducted some joint operations with the Peruvian Army in the UHV.

President Garcia continued reauthorizing a 60-day state of emergency in parts of Peru's five departments where SL operates, suspending some civil liberties, and giving the armed forces additional authority to maintain public order. There was no movement on President Garcia's 2006 proposal calling for the death penalty for those convicted of acts of terrorism.

The Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) has not conducted terrorist activities since the December 1996 hostage-taking at the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima. Efforts to reconstitute an organizational structure were not in evidence in 2008, though former MRTA members were working to establish a political party called the Free Fatherland Movement ("Movimiento Patria Libre") to compete in future elections.

There was no evidence that foreign terrorists were using Peru as a safe haven.

SL founder and leader Abimael Guzman and key accomplices remained in prison serving life sentences on charges stemming from crimes committed during the 1980s and 1990s.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) continued to use remote areas along the Colombian/Peruvian border for rest and to make arms purchases. Experts believed the FARC continued to fund coca cultivation and cocaine production among the Peruvian population in border areas.

End of Peru report.
McKinley